

Official

AUGUST, 1951

WRESTLING

25¢



LOU THESZ
DA GROSA
GOLDEN DOZEN



Our cover, made by Alan Fontaine, famous color photographer, shows Jack Dempsey having a tough time rescuing Carol Cook, left, from Mae Weston's "Adam's Apple" hold.

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Dempsey Thumbs Down on Women Referees

Manassa Mauler says women wrestlers would not respect female arbiter; sees three-way hassles to get in last word

By Lou Thesz

Most male professional wrestlers resent the intrusion of women into the field of what men feel is their exclusive sport. I must confess that I'm in sympathy with the majority. But now that the girls are in it, the question rises, should there be women referees to officiate at bouts between lady grapplers?

There are two schools of thought on this, and here again the negative side leads by a mile. Milo Steinborn, the noted promoter, is about the most prominent supporter of the woman arbiter, and some of the girl wrestlers themselves are mildly in favor, too. Milo believes it would be "all right" to have women officiate, "but then," he adds naively, "there are no women outstanding for the job."

Well, now, like the druggist in the Gildersleeve radio program, I wouldn't go so far as to say that. I read recently about a demure lady of 70-plus, who always expressed a disdain for wrestling, yet every night she sat through the matches on her television, explaining she couldn't sleep if she retired too early. One night a hoodlum broke into the house by way of Grandma's window, but tripped over a footstool and fell. Before he could get up, Grandma had grabbed him by the leg and twisted it around the bedpost and held it firmly while she yelled lustily for help. Afterward she explained airily: "Oh, I just took him with a step-over toe hold."

Now, there's a woman who might qualify as a referee; but you can see that her kind doesn't come a dime a dozen!

Milo Steinborn also observes that it would require an "extra" referee where the women appear on regular shows, composed mostly of men wrestlers. The "extra" of course, being the female ref. He further points out that the women matches pose a ticklish situation for the male referee, as the latter necessarily is squeamish about "handling" the female contestants in breaking them from illegal holds, etc.

The girls themselves don't seem to have any great desire for women officials, and those who do are lukewarm in their opinions. Carol Cook, for instance—who, by the way, is pretty much her own referee once she gets in the ring—says she'd be for

a woman official, provided Carol was allowed to name her. In which case she'd have her own mother as referee.

"After all," says Carol, "if a guy like Milton Berle can have his Ma lead the claque for him at his shows, why shouldn't I have mine in there to give *me* the breaks? Women are so biased!"

So much for the minority. Now let's look at the other side of the question:

Jack Dempsey, a competent referee, who certainly should know whereof he speaks, is decidedly against women as referees. "I'm a firm believer in women's rights," said Jack in his Broadway restaurant recently, "and must admit that in this age there are few jobs intelligent women are not competent to fill. But I am equally firm in the belief that refereeing wrestling contests is one of them. In the first place, women are inherently prone to pay more heed to a man in obeying orders.

"As a matter of fact, that word 'obey' is in the marriage contract, or shall we say ceremony, and it is always the woman who has to agree to obey the man, not vice versa.

Lilly Bitter, left, and Millie Stafford give Dempsey plenty of attention as he reads the riot act to them



Dempsey

"Also, women are notorious for wanting to have the last word, and they usually get it. Now, that might be argued as a point in favor of them as referees, but in wrestling you'd have THREE women, and with ALL of them striving to get in that last word, the match might well wind up in a hassle that would make an umpire's job in a baseball rhubarb look like a pink tea.

"Wrestling as a spectator sport is staging a great comeback, there's no gainsaying that. There's also no doubt that some bouts have verged on the ridiculous with some of the contestants staging too much clowning. This has been encouraged by television shows. But more and more I find that cash customers prefer good, fast, clean wrestling, with one or perhaps a couple of the 'ham' acts spotted in between. These are O. K. when staged by grapplers who really know how to wrestle, but they can be carried too far.

"It's my opinion that women referees for the bouts between girls wouldn't enhance the game at all. Understand, I'm not turning thumbs down on lady wrestling. All the girls I've met or seen are fine women, and most of them put on real good and exciting matches.

"The crowds seem to like them, for the most part, and I don't know any promoter who has come out definitely against them. But, although the promoters advise me that 43 states allow bouts between women wrestlers, they are banned in a few states, notably New York and Connecticut. But then, so is liquor banned in some of our states."

Women wrestling promoters, on the other hand, are a horse of a different color. No offense meant. I'm not comparing women to horses, far be it from me. Notable examples, and the only two I know of, are Florence Turner, of Washington, D. C., and Mrs. Ernestine Murtaugh, of New Orleans. And admittedly, they do a fine job.

But to stick to my subject, which has to do with whether we should have women referees for lady wrestling bouts; in my humble opinion, I doubt that the various State Athletic Commissions, even where these bouts are permitted, would issue women referee licenses.

To sum up, there's no demand for them--yet!

There's no use denying that there is a certain amount of—shall we say "jealousy"?—in the attitude of some male wrestlers toward the advent of women into the game. This is quite natural, and is always the case not only in wrestling, but in any business or profession when the distaff side starts to encroach as rival attractions. Remember the obstacles placed against Woman Suffrage back in the old days, when women's place really was in the home?

The day is coming, however—perhaps is already here—when women wrestlers will be universally welcomed into the sport, both by spectators and participants. I must admit that so far, the women wrestlers have conducted themselves in a not objectionable manner. They give a good performance, and many of them have become real experts in the science of wrestling.

Some of the girls have put on battles so exciting and enthusiastic, yes, even rough, that they bore out the old saying that "the female of the species is more deadly than the male."

But they do not indulge in as much "hamming" as some of the bouts between the males, as a rule.

One might expect that the girls would be so afraid of having their beauty marred by rough tactics they would be timid; but that doesn't seem to be the case. Indeed, it's the beauties who are the "desperadoes" among the female grapplers. And the fact is they do sustain injuries.

There's one thing the girls have to do which the men wrestlers don't have to worry about. The femmes have to get themselves dolled up by the beauticians regularly every week, just like women in any other business or profession.

In fact, in their street regalia, you'd have a hard time picking some of our gal wrestlers out of a bunch of society debutantes!

Maybe the girls will have as much appeal for the men spectators as some of the masculine stars have for the women customers.

And that's only natural, too!

Looks like Jack is in the middle here playing peek-a-boo as Carol Cook, right, clamps a "sleeper" hold on Mae Weston.



Bitter was the Victor

Whenever Lilly Bitter and Mars Bennett tangle, the ring is full of action

When Lilly (Lillian) Bitter, and the veteran Mars Bennett, got together everyone expected that the mat victory would go to Miss Bennett with ease. Miss Bennett has long been one of the top girl wrestlers and has an impressive record of wins over the best in the business.

On the other hand, the young lady from Newark, N. J., has been wrestling but a few months. Don't let that fool you, however, for as Billy Wolfe, the girl wrestling promoter says: "She shows more promise at this stage of the game than did Champion Mildred Burke. In a year she will be one of the most polished wrestlers in the sport."

Lilly is of Russian parents, just nineteen, stands 5 feet 5 inches and weighs 135 pounds. She likes to wrestle in bare feet.

She started her wrestling career after becoming a friend of Tony Galento, veteran fighter and matman. She met wrestling first via television and then went to matches to see first hand what it was like. She decided that if other girls could make good money in the ring she could herself, so gave up her job in a Newark 5 and 10 cent store and went at it in earnest.

Unlike most young wrestling aspirants, she did not require weeks or months of training before making her pro debut. Just ten days after having an interview with Willie Gilzenberg, Galento's manager, she climbed into the ring as part of a tag team match in Sydney, Neb. Performing like a veteran her team won. She's been a consistent winner ever since.

Mars corners Lilly and proceeds to plant her knees in the middle of things while the referee, with an eye on her ropeholding, counts

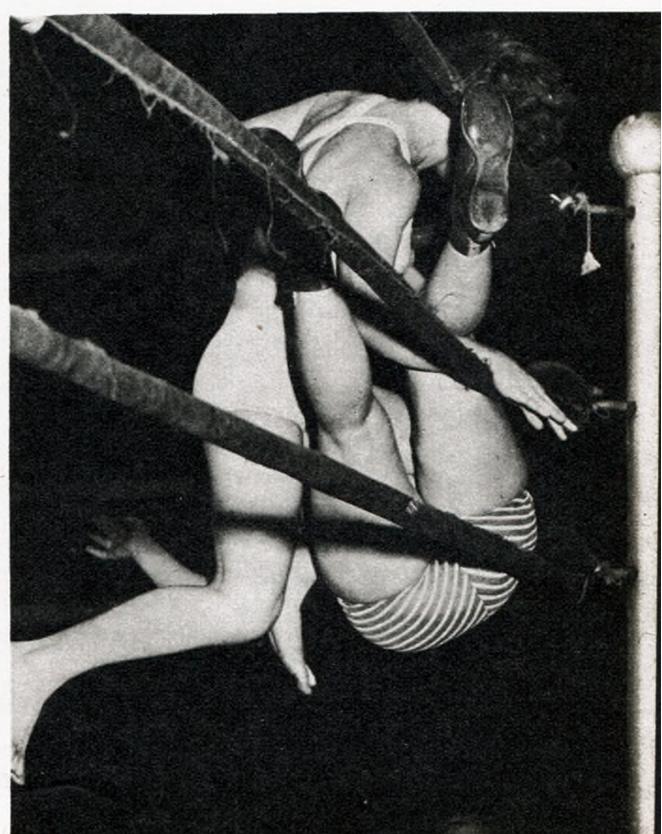
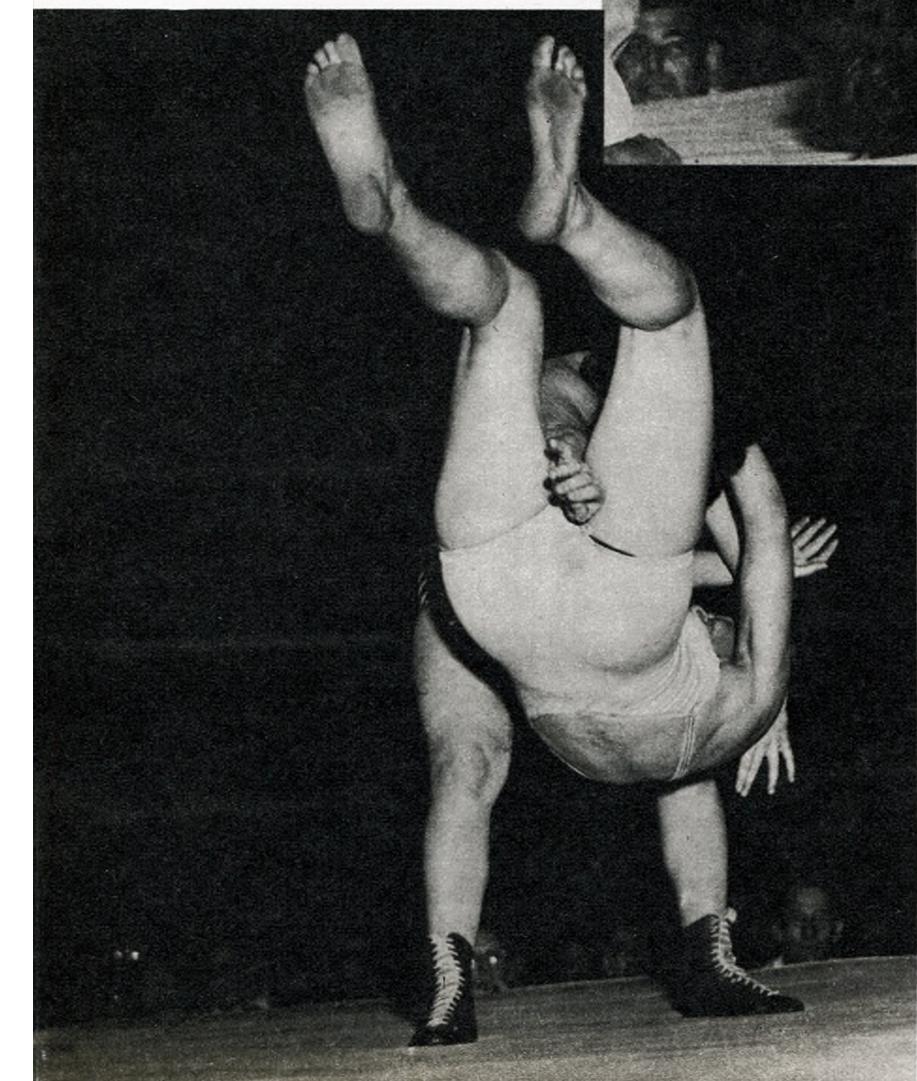


Lilly, still on the receiving end of things, tries to kick Mars' hands from her ankle as Miss Bennett puts on a step-over toe-hold and ankle twist

Lilly braces herself as best she can as Mars Bennett maneuvers her into position for a vicious body slam. Lilly better get into action herself



The tide turns with a vengeance and Lilly Bitter comes back to win the match from Mars





Mae Weston



Jane Byers



Dot Dotson



Millie Stafford



Theresa Theis



Vicki Page



Carol Cook



Mars Bennett



Gloria Barattini



Mildred Burke



Nell Stewart



Adela Antone

Adela Antone
Mildred Burke
Jane Byers
Mars Bennett
Gloria Barattini
Carol Cook
Dot Dotson
Vicki Page
Nell Stewart
Millie Stafford
Theresa Theis
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